

I support media diversity

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

In my region, New York City and Long Island, almost every major station is owned by a corporate giant such as Clear Channel and Infinity. A result of this concentration of ownership is that most radio stations come off as sounding very similar, from their music to their presentation. Local artists do not get airplay. Songs that may be more popular in this area than in the country as a whole don't get any extra airplay. Many radio stations are beginning to use syndicated and voicetracked programming during much of their broadcast day, taking away local jobs and a local voice from the airwaves.

Very few local broadcasters remain, but those that do are struggling to survive in the face of such "competition." I first want to mention three stations owned by Jarad Broadcasting (the only three radio stations it owns)--WLIR 92.7 FM from Garden City, NY, WXXP 105.3 FM from Calverton-Roanoke, NY, and WDRE 98.5 FM from Westhampton, NY. These stations manage to combine local air personalities, feature local artists and songs that may be more popular in this region than elsewhere, sponsor independent local concerts, and are very active in the community. Despite limited signal strength and a budget that is a fraction of what Clear Channel and other media giants can afford, these stations struggle to get respectable ratings, and do a good job of serving their communities and the public interest. Unfortunately, with the proposed deregulation of the industry, conditions in the radio shift may adversely affect stations like these.

I also would like to mention the demise of two other locally owned radio stations, as a result of the previous media deregulation rules. WEVD (now WEPN) 1050 AM and WQEW 1560 AM, both from New York City, used to be two independent stations--WEVD offered an alternative choice for listeners of talk radio, while WQEW garnered decent ratings as an adult standards station, the only one in the market. Both these stations have been replaced by ABC's ESPN Radio and Radio Disney, respectively. Both stations combined barely get 0.5% of the audience, and almost their entire programming day is voicetracked from elsewhere. These stations do not serve the public interest, do not serve their local communities, but are taking up two of the most powerful signals on the AM dial. Such cases could become more common as a result of the deregulation proposals.

I and other area radio listeners urge you to reject this proposal, and allow radio broadcasting to return to the hands of the public. After all, radio was created to and exists to serve the public interest, on public airwaves. Having a small number of huge corporations controlling public airwaves is a travesty of the public interests and the public's right to free speech and access to information.

Sincerely,
Michael Nevradakis

